Dustin' off the NEWS

By LUCIUS C. HARPER

Chicago Defender 12

HERE IS ANOTHER "FORTY-NINTH STATE" IDEA IN ALASKA

Sat 6-7-47

SOME years ago there was a movement on foot in Chicago to establish a "Forty-ninth State for Negroes." As I recall, its promoters, who were Negroes, thought the wide unused spaces of Texas offered a proper spot to pioneer such a project; the government, of course, permitting. However, the movement died for lack of enthusiastic support. Now comes Mr. G. W. Van Fleet of Cabool, Mo., with a similar idea. He asks that we pass it to you for your consideration. His proposal, or suggestion, follows:

Lucius Harper

The present population of Alaska is now looking forward to Statehood, and the time is now propitious for us to give serious thought to the situation, with a view to work out a fixed plan for the territory. The Negro population has been struggling for many years to make a place for themselves in our Government, and this may now be an opportunity to give them a chance to prove what they can do in the way of self-government. This is now a live question, as the population of Alaska has in a recent election indicated their desire for Statehood, and the matter of their admission will soon be up for consideration in Congress. The present population is now about 80,000, mostly Indians, and Eskimos. On account of the many opportunities offered there, a population of 500,000 is none too large for the establishment of Statehood. Alaska offers a big opportunity for a group of citizens who might be carefully selected to fill the requirements of that vast area, larger than the State of Texas.

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It is suggested that the President should appoint a Commission of Negro citizens to make a careful study of the situation, and determine if a representative number of their population would be interested in such an opportunity. If there is a favorable reaction among the Negro population, the Commission can work out a fixed plan for the moving of a definite number under a well organized program. The following is an outline of a program which should be considered:

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THE COMMISSION could arrange for the moving to Alaska 500,000 of their adult population, under a regulated plan of settlement, by sending a carefully selected group of 250,000 during 1947, and an additional number each year thereafter until the 500,000 of their adult population has been moved and proper living establishments have been equipped to care for them.

It could select from their population in the various states a number of well-qualified persons who could meet all the requirements needed to set up a sound population and Government. A fixed number can be experienced in various types of farming which will meet Alaskan requirements. A good number can be experienced, or otherwise qualified, to handle lumbering and sawmill operations. A required number of doctors, dentists, nurses, and other professions to meet the requirements of such a population. The first 250,000 to be sent should be carefully chosen to make sure that they start out with a sound citizenship qualified to set up a sound government. The balance of the 500,000 to be sent should also be carefully picked to give them a well rounded program of operation.

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A fixed date should be set up for admission to Statehood, which could be immediately following the moving and the establishment of the first 250,000, which will give the Commission time to complete a well organized program. The President could appoint a Negro Governor of Alaska as soon as the first 250,000 of the population has been established.

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WE HAVE A large Negro population in America, and many of these citizens have done a good job of making a place for themselves under adverse and limited conditions. Alaska would give them an opportunity to develop a Negro State with their own Government. Many citizens of the Negro population have proven their ability in commercial enterprise, as evidenced by a substantial amount of wealth some of them have built up. We have many well trained Negro citizens in the field of business and finance. If the Commission should be successful in interesting those who have working capital, they will have a good opportunity to make money in Alaska. A new country always offers a money making opportunity. Our Government could work out a plan of long-time financing for the new State, so that the new population can be expected to make progress from the beginning, and eventually make Alaska one of our outstanding States.

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Alaska now needs a substantial increase in population to qualify for Statehood. It is not likely that such ncrease in population can be expected from general emigration. It can best be expected from a group now in a crowded condition desiring to seek a new future opportunity. Instead of allowing the matter to drift and the present population to work out its own salvation, it would seem more wise to consider a special group, such as the Negro population. Of all groups in America which might be considered, the Negro seems to be the best suited to the Alaskan situation.

The public information about Alaska seems to indicate that it offers great possibilities in small business enterprises, and the Negro is for that reason well suited to such circumstances. The territory seems to offer farming in small tracts, lumbering and sawmilling in small operations. Such small business operations would not require large capital investment, and for that reason the Commission might find a group of Negro citizens who could do much of their own financing, or at least some of the financing could be done with funds now at their disposal.

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THE ALASKAN situation is timely and ripe. If our Government wishes to give the Negro an opportunity, and these citizens wish to take advantage of such an offering, it is a good time for it to be considered, before it comes up for consideration by Congress. It must be remembered that the Negro has done well in the North in cold climates. Many of them came from the South and settled in the big cities of the North, and more than many of us believe, have built up sizeable estates and a considerable amount of wealth.

The present population of Alaska is of the type which will mix well with the new Negro population as is here suggested, and there cannot be any reasonable objection to the Negro as a race going into Alaska. So, with a well selected group of Negro citizens, under the direction of a well organized Commission, desirable results can be expected, and a sound State organization can be developed in a few years.

This seems to be a golden opportunity for the Negro to establish himself; to prove himself equal to any other citizen and win for himself a place under the sun. It seems the quickest way for him to demonstrate his executive ability, and get world-wide recognition. It will give those of us white men who believe in him, an opportunity to help him win a place of honor among us. It will solve the Alaskan problem.

Norfolk, Va. Pilot
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Virginia's Other President

(12) Liberia

Tomorrow Virginia's Negro schools and colleges will hold ceremonies appropriate to observance of Joseph Jenkins Roberts Roberts Day, as proclaimed by Governor Tuck. Roberts was born 138 years ago, either in Norfolk or Petersburg, the son of free Negro parents. Tomorrow, on his birthday's eve, a portrait of him will be unveiled at Virginia State College in Petersburg. In that city he acquired property, held membership in a church and pursued an education. Events of the early nineteenth century made him president of a new republic and leader of an experiment in colonization. The republic—named Liberia by a white missionary—remains one of Africa's most interesting countries.

The Liberians are preparing to celebrate the centennial of their independence. A million and a half of them inhabit a country approximately the size of Virginia. Five-sixths of their land is dense, tropical forest, but wonderfully fertile. A few of the people wear European clothes, but the tribes wear Mohammedan burnooses. Some of the interior place-names are American—there is a Bunker Hill and a Maryland County—but the capes have Portuguese designations. The official language is English.

These disjointed facts suggest Liberia's disjointed history. The country was discovered by the Portuguese and later sandwiched between British and French colonies. The American Colonization Society, founded in 1817, purchased it from the British to encourage there the migration of free Negroes from America. In 1824 the name Liberia was adopted and the capital, today a town of 11,000, was christened Monrovia in honor of President Monroe. Joseph Jenkins Roberts migrated to Liberia five years later. He became the last governor under the Colonization Society and the first under Liberia's independence, which President Lincoln recognized in 1862.

To Joseph Jenkins Roberts belongs much of the credit for the brave attempt of the republic to set up a government modeled after that of the United States. Curiously, the problem of slavery, which the handful of American immigrants had fled this country to escape, plagued Roberts until the British navy helped him to end the traffic toward the close of the first of his two tenures in 1856. The Virginia-born president left Liberia with a tradition of progress. The one country in Africa under an all-native government, untouched by foreign domination, it has pursued the tradition to the best of its limited resources.

How'd ya like to be an Eskimo?
Negro evacuation to Alaska proposed

12 Los Angeles, Calif. Tribune

CABOOL, Mo. — First it was Africa, then Mississippi; now it's Alaska. Sat. 7-19-47

G. W. Van Fleet, a turkey farmer near here thinks Negroes should be moved to Alaska, and the territory admitted to the union as a Negro state with a Negro governor.

Setting forth his views in a privately printed tract, "Alaska, a Negro State Under a Negro Government", Van Fleet, a white man, regards the colonization of Alaska by Negroes "as the quickest way for the Negro to demonstrate his executive ability and to gain worldwide recognition". It will moreover "give those of us white men who believe in him an opportunity to help him win a place of honor among us. And it will solve the Alaskan problem." Sat. 9-19-47

The present population of Alaska, according to Van Fleet is 100,000, made up of whites, Indians and Eskimos. It is "of the type which will mix well with the Negro population", Van Fleet writes. His plan is that the state should be established with 500,000 U. S. Negroes, sent there by a Negro commission appointed by the President in batches of 250,000. With the settlement of the first 250,000, Van Fleet thinks Alaska should be accepted as a state and the governor appointed.